POLITICS, RELIGION AND THE BRITISH REVOLUTIONS

The mind of Samuel Rutherford

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Introduction

On a hilltop above the tiny hamlet of Anwoth in south-west Scotland there stands a fifty-six foot granite obelisk. Erected in the mid-nineteenth century, its inscription praises the parish's former minister, the Covenanter Samuel Rutherford, for his 'distinguished public labours in the cause of civil and religious liberty'.[1] Its presence is indicative of Rutherford's posthumous fame, a fame which rested above all on his political treatise *Lex, Rex*, and on his pious *Letters*. Rutherford was lionised by Victorian Evangelicals as a towering defender of constitutional freedoms and as one of the greatest devotional writers in the history of the church. His *Letters* passed through approximately one hundred editions (including at least twenty in foreign languages), formed the basis for a popular hymn, turned Anwoth into a place of pilgrimage, and made Rutherford the subject of numerous popular essays and biographies. Even in the 1980s, his *Letters* were still in print, and *Lex, Rex* was being cited by the religious right in the United States as an important influence on the US Constitution and a powerful justification for civil disobedience to liberal abortion laws. One American admirer – as unaware as the obelisk-builders of Rutherford's support for persecution – went so far as to establish an international 'Rutherford Institute' to protect religious freedom.

However, Rutherford's Evangelical admirers were not the only ones to stress his historical significance. Historians have also acknowledged his status as 'the Scottish Revolution's most distinguished theorist'.[2] According to W. H. Makey, Rutherford understood better than any of his contemporaries the nature of the revolutionary process; he knew exactly where he was going and why he failed.[3] The book he wrote to justify the Covenanting

[1] See the description in F. H. Groome, ed., *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland*, 6 vols. (London, 1894–5), I, pp. 1–10.

[2] A. Williamson, 'The Jewish dimension of the Scottish apocalypse: climate, covenant and world renewal', in Y. Kaplan, H. Mechoulan and R. H. Popkin, eds., *Menasseh Ben Israel and his World* (Leiden, 1989), p. 25. Michael Lynch describes Rutherford as 'the leading theoretician of the Covenanting kirk', *A New History of Scotland* (London, 1991), p. 251.

[3] W. H. Makey, *The Church of the Covenant* (Edinburgh, 1979), p. 91.

revolution, *Lex, Rex* (1644), has been called 'the most influential Scottish work on political theory',[4] and 'the classic statement' of Covenanter political thought.[5] His *Free Disputation Against Pretended Liberty of Conscience* (1649), has been described by Owen Chadwick as 'the ablest defence of persecution in the seventeenth century'.[6] In addition, Rutherford was undoubtedly one of the most prominent defenders of Presbyterianism in his day, and a Calvinist theologian with an international readership.[7]

Yet for all this, there has been no modern intellectual biography of Rutherford. This book therefore seeks to provide the first comprehensive study of his life and thought. The Introduction sets the scene by surveying Rutherford's changing reputation from his own lifetime to the present day. It shows how his admirers have focused selectively on particular aspects of his works and missed the whole picture. It also explains why Rutherford and other Scottish Presbyterians have been neglected by academic historians and argues that the time is ripe for a reassessment of their religion and politics.

THE REPUTATIONS OF RUTHERFORD

Rutherford's reputation in his own lifetime

The only surviving portrait of Samuel Rutherford was probably painted while he was at the Westminster Assembly, by the artist Robert Walker.[8] Rutherford is shown in skull cap, gown and clerical bands, his hair tumbling down over his gown in thick curls, his face plump, his features prominent, and his gaze intense but enigmatic. From the early eighteenth-century Presbyterian historian Robert Wodrow we know that Rutherford was 'a little fair man', with 'two quick eyes'. Whether walking or preaching, it was observed that 'he held ay his face upward and heavenward'.[9]

[4] D. Stevenson, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Scotland, 1644–51* (London, 1977), p. 235.

[5] J. Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 57n.

[6] O. Chadwick, *The Reformation* (Harmondsworth, 1964), p. 403.

[7] On his preeminence among the conservative Reformed theologians of Scotland see J. Walker, *The Theology and Theologians of Scotland, 1560–1750* (Edinburgh, 1982 edn), p. 8, and M. C. Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 70.

[8] Robert Gilmour, one of Rutherford's biographers, owned this portrait and describes its history. Apparently it was once owned by a Roman Catholic priest who gave it to a Presbyterian friend after explaining, 'That is the arch-heretic, Samuel Rutherford'. Gilmour thought that Rutherford resembled his mother and her sister, who were rumoured to be descended from a close relative of Rutherford! See *Samuel Rutherford: A Study* (London, 1904), pp. 233–5. The portrait now hangs in St Marys College, St Andrews University, the college where Rutherford was principal.

[9] R. Wodrow, *Analecta, or Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1842–43), II, p. 4; III, p. 88–9.

We know too that Rutherford was a deeply emotional man, given to fits of depression and moments of ecstatic exaltation. As will become apparent, his friendships – particularly with his female parishioners – were intense, and throughout his life he seems to have struggled with lust. Yet his warmth and energy earned him great respect and love among the godly. Friends and allies were quick to point out that Rutherford 'shined in humility, and thought alwayes meanly of himself and highly of other ministers'. He insisted on calling his friend and colleague, Robert Blair, 'Sir' rather than 'Brother'.[10] He was, moreover, 'extremly, and almost excessively, charitable',[11] especially to the poor.[12]

To those who opposed him, however, Rutherford could turn another face. Wodrow tells us that he was 'naturally hote and fiery'.[13] In a debate with other ministers in the 1650s, he fell on one 'like a falcon', 'with a great warmth, and abused him pretty severely',[14] and on another occasion when a drawing of lots fell out badly he was described as 'extremely stormy'.[15] Wodrow records the Marquis of Argyll as saying that Rutherford 'was a good man, but soon sadled [encumbered], because of his acrimoniouse writing'.[16] Those at the sharp end of Rutherford's bitter attacks failed to see any goodness in him at all. The royalist Sir James Balfour described him as 'a hatter of all men not of his opinion, and one quho if never so lightlie offendit, unreconciliable; voyd of mercey and charity, although a teacher of both to others'.[17]

To the wider reading public who never met him in person, Rutherford was known above all as a controversialist. He wrote for an international audience and commanded international attention. Of the sixteen works published during his lifetime, twelve were printed in London, only three in Edinburgh.[18] His first published work, *Exercitationes pro Divina Gratia* (1636) was printed in the Netherlands, as were his *Letters* (1664), and a book compiled from his lecture notes, *Examen Arminianismi* (1668). The Latin treatises against Arminianism earned him invitations to professorships at Dutch universities in 1649 and 1651, but some Reformed theologians, like John Owen and Richard Baxter, felt that he had taken the orthodox

[10] Wodrow, *Analecta*, III, p. 90. [11] Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, p. 147.

[12] Wodrow, *Analecta*, III, p. 89. Rutherford left some money for the use of the poor of St Andrews in his will. See T. Murray, *Life of Rutherford* (Edinburgh, 1828), p. 360.

[13] Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, p. 147. [14] Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, p. 118.

[15] Wodrow, *Analecta*, I, p. 140. [16] Wodrow, *Analecta*, I, p. 166.

[17] James Balfour, *The Annales of Scotland*, III (London, 1825), p. 413.

[18] Of these three, only one can be said to have a specifically Scottish audience in mind: *The Last and Heavenly Speeches of Viscount Kenmuir* (1649) told the cautionary and edifying tale of Rutherford's noble patron, who had for a while deserted the radical Presbyterian cause only to be reconciled to it, and to God on his deathbed. Rutherford probably hoped that it would persuade recalcitrant nobles to give their full backing to the kirk party regime established in 1649.

stress on divine sovereignty a step too far.[19] Others believed that his attacks on Antinomianism in his English books introduced too strong an element of moralism into Reformed theology.[20]

However, Rutherford's ecclesiological treatises seemed to have aroused more controversy than his theology, particularly amongst the New England Puritans who had to defend their Congregationalism against the charge that it lay at the root of the sectarian anarchy of 1640s England. John Cotton, their foremost spokesman, took it upon himself to reply to Rutherford twice, in *The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared* (1647), and *The Holinesse of Church Members* (1648). Thomas Hooker's Congregationalist classic, the *Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline* (1648), was also written in response to *The Due Right of Presbyteries*.[21] In England, too, Rutherford was famed as a champion of Scottish Presbyterianism and a scourge of the sects. His speeches in the Westminster Assembly, and the ecclesiological works he wrote whilst in London, provoked John Milton to name him among the 'New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament'.[22]

However, Rutherford's polemical works attracted admirers as well as critics. As we shall see in Chapter 6, his anti-absolutist polemic, *Lex, Rex* (1644), was republished under different titles in 1648 and 1657, and may have influenced John Milton and John Lilburne. In addition, his ecclesiological works, his attacks on the sects, and his defences of orthodox Reformed theology were gratefully received by many conservative divines in Scotland, England and overseas.[23]

Besides being renowned for his polemics, Rutherford was also famed for his sermons. Robert Wodrow preserved the testimony of an English merchant who went to Scotland and was moved by the power of Rutherford's preaching, which 'shewed me the lovelyness of Christ'. 'The Englishman', Wodrow assured his Scottish readers, 'became an excellent

[19] See J. Owen, *A Dissertation on Divine Justice*, in *Works*, ed. W. H. Goold, X (London, 1967 edn), ch. 17; R. Baxter, *Catholick Theologie* (London, 1675), pp. 106–14. The works by Hagen and Strang, listed in the bibliography, also express similar concerns.

[20] See R. Towne, *A Reassertion of Grace . . . in a reply to Mr Rutherford's "Tryall and Triumph of Faith"* (1654).

[21] On the ecclesiology of the New England Puritans see P. Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (2nd edn: Cambridge, Mass., 1967). On the specific case of Rutherford's long-running debate with Thomas Hooker, see S. Bush, *The Writings of Thomas Hooker* (London, 1980), pp. 109ff.

[22] *John Milton*, ed. S. Orgel and J. Goldberg (Oxford, 1990), pp. 83–4.

[23] For example, the eighteenth-century New England revivalist and philosopher, Jonathan Edwards, recommended the *Survey of Spiritual Antichrist* in his classic work on *The Religious Affections*, ed. J. E. Smith (New Haven, 1959), pp. 72, 287. For further positive references to Rutherford's theological and ecclesiological treatises, see the *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, ed. N. H. Keeble and G. Nuttall, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1991), I: 140; II: 17, 114.

Christian'.[24] Many thousands, mostly in Scotland, also heard Rutherford in person, and were similarly stirred by the passion of his preaching. Others encountered Rutherford the preacher through the printed page, particularly through two volumes of his sermons which were published in the 1640s.[25] These were not only read in Scotland; we know that both Isaac Newton and Richard Baxter owned one of these books, *The Tryal and Triumph of Faith* (1645),[26] and that Mary, Countess of Warwick, was an avid reader of Rutherford's devotional works.[27]

In contrast to his sermons, Rutherford's letters were not published in his lifetime. However, the contemporary historian John Row recorded that 'sundrie begouth to gather them together, and have whole books full of them',[28] and in 1652, Johnston of Wariston wrote in his diary: 'I found much lyfe and love in M. S[amuel] R[utherford's] lettres, written when he was banished to Aberdeen.'[29] Yet according to his earliest biographer, Robert McWard, Rutherford 'did not at all intend' the letters 'for publicke use', and 'did violence to the desires of many in refusing to publish them'.[30] Ironically, the letters were first published by McWard himself in 1664 and were to attract a far greater readership than did the rest of Rutherford's works put together.

Rutherford and the British Evangelical tradition

In the light of Rutherford's own reluctance to publish his letters, it is ironic that his posthumous reputation has rested upon them almost entirely, whilst the works he published in his lifetime have suffered almost complete neglect. Rutherford the controversialist was forgotten; Rutherford the Evangelical mystic remained. Since their original publication in 1664, the *Letters* have

[24] Wodrow, *Analecta*, III, p. 3.

[25] *The Tryal and Triumph of Faith* (1645) comprised sermons on the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman told in the Synoptic Gospels, and *Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himself* (1647) was a book of 600 pages on John 12: 27–33.

[26] See J. Harrison, *The Library of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 230; G. Nuttall, 'A Transcript of Richard Baxter's Library Catalogue', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 3 (1952), p. 80.

[27] See W. Lamont, 'The two "national churches" of 1691 and 1829', in A. Fletcher and P. Roberts, eds., *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 342. The accounts of spiritual experiences recorded in her diary are almost identical to passages from Rutherford's letters: she wrote that a communion service 'set my heart a panting and breathing after Christ, longing to embrace him in the armes of my faith. I did there enjoy such sweet and ravishing communion with God.'

[28] J. Row, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland, From the Year 1558 to 1637* (Edinburgh, 1842), pp. 396–7. A book of seventeenth-century copies of Rutherford's *Letters* survives in St Andrew's University Library.

[29] Wariston, *Diary*, II, ed. D. H. Fleming (Edinburgh, 1919), p. 167.

[30] Robert McWard, preface to *Joshua Redivivus, or Mr Rutherfoords Letters* (1664).

been republished no fewer than eighty times in English in many editions, the fullest being that of Andrew Bonar which contains 365 letters and is still in print. They were also translated into Dutch in 1673, and there are at least fifteen editions in that language. In addition, they have appeared in German, French and Gaelic.[31]

For generations a copy of Rutherford's *Letters* was a cherished possession in the homes of Scottish peasants; the bibliographer Watt claimed that the *Letters* were particularly popular 'among the lower classes of Scotland'.[32] Images from them were woven into a hymn that has been sung by millions, 'The Sands of Time are Sinking'. They attained the status of a spiritual classic. Richard Baxter was said to have declared that he disagreed with Rutherford on several issues, 'But for that book of letters, hold off the Bible, such a book the world never saw the like!'[33] The great Victorian Baptist, C. H. Spurgeon, wrote: 'When we are dead and gone let the world know that Spurgeon held Rutherford's *Letters* to be the nearest thing to inspiration which can be found in all the writings of mere men'.[34] The Yorkshireman, Hudson Taylor, who founded the largest Protestant missionary society in China, often meditated on the *Letters*, and wrote a widely read devotional study of the Song of Songs with the very Rutherfordian title, *Union and Communion*.[35]

In sharp contrast to the *Letters* and sermons, however, Rutherford's controversial works lay buried in their seventeenth-century editions. None of the three Latin treatises on which his contemporary theological reputation rested have been republished or translated into English. Moreover, none of his polemical works in English have been republished, with the notable exception of *Lex, Rex*. Apart from *Lex, Rex*, the only works of Rutherford published in his own lifetime and later reprinted after his death are his sermons, the *Last and Heavenly Speeches*, *The Tryal and Triumph of Faith*, and *Christ Dying*, all of which can be read as inspirational rather than controversial works.

When we consider the writings of Rutherford that were first published after his death, our picture of his posthumous reputation becomes even clearer. An edition of 284 letters came first, published in Rotterdam in 1664 by Rutherford's secretary. Then in the early eighteenth century a number of

[31] A list of the many editions of the *Letters* is to be found in the bibliography.

[32] R. Watt, *Bibliotheca Brittanica, or a General Index to British and Foreign Literature*, II (Edinburgh, 1824), p. 823. See also G. Robertson, *Rural Recollections* (Irvine, 1829), p. 98.

[33] Wodrow, *Analecta*, III, p. 89. In his *Christian Directory* (London, 1673), p. 922, Baxter recommended that 'Mr Rutherfords letters' should be in 'the poorest or smallest library that is tolerable'.

[34] C. H. Spurgeon in *The Sword and the Trowel*, June 1891.

[35] H. Taylor and G. Taylor, *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission: The Growth of a Work of God* (1918), p. 163.

his sermons were printed from the notes of hearers. These continued to be reprinted throughout the nineteenth century and were finally gathered together by Andrew Bonar in the *Communion Sermons* (1877) and *Quaint Sermons* (1885). Apart from the sermons and letters only three more Rutherford works were published posthumously; a catechism, *A Testimony to the Work of Reformation in Britaine and Ireland*, and *Examen Arminianismi*, a treatise drawn from his lectures to students at St Andrews.

The publishing history of Rutherford's writings and sermons reveals much about the history of British Protestantism. The ultimate failure of the Puritan revolution combined with the success of the Glorious Revolution to make Evangelical Protestantism more other-worldly and pietistic. The Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century under Wesley and Whitefield probably strengthened this tendency, and severely undermined cerebral Reformed scholasticism. The result was that Rutherford was appropriated by a quietist tradition that chose to ignore his polemical works but found his devotional writings of great value for the inner life of the soul. John Wesley himself included a selection of the letters in volume 28 of his *Christian Library* (1753). 'These letters', he commented, 'have been generally admired by all the children of God for the vein of piety, trust in God and holy zeal which runs through them'.[36] Arminian Evangelicals had no difficulty in extracting the gold of Rutherford's piety and leaving behind the dross of his scholastic predestinarianism.[37]

This neutering of Rutherford necessarily involved a certain amount of hagiographical romanticisation. This began soon after his death, probably even within his own lifetime. Wodrow tells the story of how as a boy of four Rutherford fell down a well 'several fathoms deep'. His sister ran to fetch her parents and when they returned they found young Samuel safe and well sitting on the grass, claiming that a 'bonny young man' had rescued him. According to Wodrow, Rutherford's parents 'concluded it was noe doubt ane angell'.[38] Later biographers were to retell the story of the well and make much of the romance of 'Fair Anwoth by the Solway'.[39] Rutherford became 'the small fair-haired letter-writer from Anwoth who showed . . . the loveliness of Christ'.[40] Anwoth became a place of pilgrimage for Scots and Ulster Protestants who came to see the place where the 'good pastor', the

[36] Quoted in F. Cook, *Samuel Rutherford and his Friends* (Edinburgh, 1992), p. 144.
[37] On Wesley's *Christian Library* and his selective use of the Puritans, see R. C. Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage* (London, 1966).
[38] Wodrow, *Analecta*, I, p. 57. The story echoes those of two young boys in the Bible: Samuel and Jesus both showed themselves to be unusually sensitive to God when they were in the temple at an early age.
[39] Gilmour, *Samuel Rutherford*. The phrase is the title of ch. 4.
[40] Cook, *Samuel Rutherford and His Friends*, p. 147.

'Saint of the Covenant', had ministered. In the 1820s, the man who was to lead the Free Church Disruption, Thomas Chalmers, recorded that the masons who were told to demolish the manse in which Rutherford had once lived refused to do so because it would be 'an act of sacrilege'; Chalmers himself 'mourned over the rubbish of the foundation'.[41] A Roman Catholic historian noted ironically that 'men who would have shuddered at the idea of revering the relics of a catholic saint . . . have lain all night long on [Rutherford's] grave in the cold kirkyard of St Andrews, seeking inspiration from nearness to his sacred ashes'.[42] Although there may be a touch of hyperbole to this, we do know that when the Scottish theologian, Thomas Halyburton, lay on his deathbed at St Andrews in 1712, he had Rutherford's *Letters* read to him, spoke in phrases drawn directly from Rutherford, and rejoiced in the knowledge that he would be buried beside his great predecessor.[43]

A. T. Innes, in a short but perceptive essay, tried to understand why Rutherford was treated in this way by his later admirers. Innes believed that there were two men in Rutherford, the schoolman and the mystic, 'St. Thomas and St. Francis under one hood'. His logic was 'masculine and agressive rather than feminine and conservative', whilst his *Letters* revealed his 'somewhat feminine nature'. Innes recounted a story first recorded by Wodrow of how Rutherford, preaching on the dissensions of the time, was suddenly caught up with speaking about Christ alone. A bystander whispered, 'Ay, now you are right – hold you there!' 'And undoubtedly', Innes concludes, 'that has been the verdict of posterity'.[44] Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Evangelicals, repelled by what they saw as the aridity of Rutherford's argumentation and disturbed by his uncharitable acrimony, often chose to pretend that they did not exist. The Rutherford *oeuvre* seemed to them 'a harsh and astringent cup, with a lump of sugar at the bottom'.[45] Believing in the religion of the heart they focused almost entirely on Rutherford the pastor, preacher and correspondent. Devout Protestants, seeing the home as a haven from the evils of the world, found in the private, homely, 'feminine' Rutherford, someone they understood.[46]

[41] *Memoirs of Thomas Chalmers*, ed. W. Hanna, III (Edinburgh, 1851), p. 130.
[42] M. G. J. Kinloch, *Studies in Scottish Ecclesiastical History* (London, 1898), p. 192.
[43] *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend, Learned and Pious Mr Thomas Halyburton* (Edinburgh, 1733), pp. 170–228.
[44] A. T. Innes, 'Samuel Rutherford', *Studies in Scottish History, Chiefly Ecclesiastical* (London, 1892), p. 48.
[45] Innes, 'Samuel Rutherford', p. 50.
[46] S. Sizar, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion* (Philadelphia, 1978), argues, from her analysis of Victorian Evangelical hymns, that the home, the woman's sphere, was portrayed as a haven from the stormy public world of the man.

Nearly all of Rutherford's biographers belong to this tradition. One of them, Alexander Whyte, the greatest preacher in late Victorian Scotland and an ardent admirer of Rutherford's piety, had no problems including this Reformed scholastic among the mystics, along with the Quaker, George Fox. He went so far as to make the *Theologica Germanica*, a book which Rutherford had castigated, the textbook for a course he gave on mysticism.[47] Robert Gilmour also declared that although Rutherford's scholastic works were 'a weariness to the flesh of even the most inveterate reader' and 'as good as dead' for modern people, his book of letters 'rank in the literature of the soul with the masterpieces of Augustine, Kempis, Taylor, Bunyan, Keble, and Martineau'.[48]

The Evangelicals who viewed Rutherford through pietistic spectacles also judged him from the standpoint of political liberalism. Nineteenth-century Evangelicalism was much more deeply imbued with liberal humanitarianism than was seventeenth-century Puritanism.[49] Consequently, Rutherford's Victorian biographers, whilst praising his piety and spirituality, felt an obligation to rebuke him for his intolerance. Grosart, an English Nonconformist, believed that the very title of Rutherford's *Free Disputation against Pretended Liberty of Conscience* was 'an offence and an opprobrium'. The real heroes of the seventeenth century were the 'elect few' who asserted the doctrine of freedom of conscience – Cromwell, Milton and the English Independents.[50]

For Scottish writers this was rather a bitter pill to swallow, for though as good Scots they wished to find a long liberal tradition in their country, as good Whigs they had to admit that there had been embarrassingly few Presbyterian advocates of toleration and freedom of conscience. Innes lamented the fact that because of Milton, 'Rutherford rhymes for ever to the

[47] G. F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte* (London, 1923), pp. 648–9. Rutherford has found himself anthologised with equally bad company on many occasions. See M. W. Tileston, *Daily Strength for Daily Needs* (Boston, 1920), and P. Toon, *Spiritual Companions: An Introduction to the Christian Classics* (London, 1990), in both of which Rutherford shares a place of honour alongside Johannes Tauler and the author of *Theologica Germanica*, mystics whom he attacked in his *Survey of Spiritual Antichrist*.

[48] Gilmour, *Samuel Rutherford*, pp. 12, 15. The traditional pietist view of Rutherford is still found today; some of his letters have recently been put into verse by a minister's wife. See F. Cook, *Grace in Winter: Rutherford in Verse* (Edinburgh, 1989), and *Samuel Rutherford and his Friends*.

[49] Indeed, Joseph Altholz has argued that Evangelicalism fostered a humanitarianism which later undermined orthodox religion by raising questions concerning the morality of the traditional doctrines of hell and the atonement. See his 'The warfare of conscience with theology', in G. Parsons, ed., *Religion in Victorian Britain*, IV: *Interpretations* (Manchester, 1988), pp. 156–8.

[50] A. B. Grosart, *Representative Nonconformists* (London, 1874), p. 203.

civil sword'.[51] But he had to acknowledge that Milton was right, and that the Covenanters were mistaken in trying to persuade parliament to impose true religion on the whole of Britain. What could be said in their defence was that they were simply children of their times, and that we in our more enlightened age should remember this before criticising them too heavily.[52]

However, the Presbyterian Whigs of Scotland were not prepared to stop with a weak apology for their national religious heritage; instead they set out to offer a Whiggish interpretation of the Covenanting movement. In order to sustain this interpretation they stressed the post-Restoration period during which the Covenanters were persecuted, rather than the period of the 1640s when they wielded oppressive power. Covenanter opposition to royal absolutism and Erastianism was emphasised, and their desire for rigid theocracy conveniently overlooked. With the aid of such selective vision, it was possible to assert that the Scotsmen of the seventeenth century 'planted the roots of our liberties',[53] and maintain that Rutherford should be extolled as a hero in the Whig history of liberty. This was because he had written *Lex, Rex*, a book which Innes claimed had become 'the constitutional inheritance of all countries in modern times'.[54] Another biographer, Andrew Thomson, described the book as 'one of the most valuable contributions to political science, a help to human progress', and claimed that 'the bringing over of William of Orange was the living embodiment of the principle of *Lex, Rex*'.[55] Given that he had also been a staunch defender of the freedom of the church from state intervention, Rutherford could be portrayed as something of a liberal. Hence the inscription on the Anwoth monument lauding him for his 'distinguished public labours in the cause of civil and religious liberty'.

In the twentieth century, in an increasingly secular climate, Rutherford has lost his great nineteenth-century reputation. However, interest in him has not died. Nineteenth-century editions of his devotional works have recently been reprinted by small Reformed publishers for a popular

[51] Innes, 'Samuel Rutherford', p. 48. In his 'On the New Forcers of Conscience Under the Long Parliament', Milton had written:

> Dare ye for this abjure the civil sword
> To force our consciences that Christ set free
> And ride us with a classic hierarchy
> Taught ye by mere A. S. and Rutherford.

[52] A. Thomson, *The Life of Samuel Rutherford* (Edinburgh, 1884), p. 112.

[53] Innes, 'Samuel Rutherford', p. 53. G. D. Henderson claimed that the spirit of the Covenanters was 'the spirit of individualism and liberalism', a spirit which finally produced the Revolution settlement of 1688–9, *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Cambridge, 1937), p. 189.

[54] Innes, 'Samuel Rutherford', p. 5.

[55] Thomson, *Samuel Rutherford*, p. 119. See also Gilmour, *Samuel Rutherford*, p. 169.

readership,[56] and in 1983 a group of Evangelicals in the Church of Scotland founded Rutherford House, a research and publishing centre intended to foster the scholarly defence and promotion of orthodox Christianity. The House is both a residential library and a publisher of journals, theological monographs and the recent *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*. Rutherford appealed to its founders not as a devotional writer, but as a major Scottish defender of Reformed theology,[57] and this in itself reflects a growing dissatisfaction with pietism among conservative Evangelicals and a new desire to tap into the intellectual resources of the Reformed tradition.

Rutherford and the American Christian Right

Meanwhile, in the United States, there has been a revival of interest in Rutherford's political thought. It has coincided with the rise of the Christian Right, and the emergence of the fundamentalist movement from its subcultural ghetto into the mainstream of American politics. Feeling threatened by what they see as an increasingly corrupt world, fundamentalists have turned their backs on their traditional sectarian quietism, and have decided to raise their voices in the public arena, in the hope that they can get the world to leave them alone, or (better still) re-Christianise American society. Those who write about Rutherford in the USA exemplify both of these approaches; at one moment they see Rutherford as a liberal and call for the state to leave the church alone, while at another they claim him as a theocrat and dream of a godly nation. Their double-mindedness reflects a deep ambivalence among American fundamentalists, who feel attracted both to liberal values like voluntarism, individualism and the free market, and to the Puritan vision of a land ordered according to the laws of God.[58] Rutherford is a particularly appealing figure to these religious conservatives because he can be cited as an example of an orthodox, eminently pious Protestant who was also deeply political.

The man responsible for this Rutherford revival was Francis Schaeffer,

[56] *Letters of Samuel Rutherford* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1984 [1891]); *The Tryal and Triumph of Faith* (Keyser, West Va.: Odom Publications, n.d. [1845]); *Communion Sermons* (Edinburgh: James A. Dickson, 1986 [1877]). In addition, a new edition of *The Power and Prevalency of Prayer* has been published as *The Power of Faith and Prayer* (Stornoway: Reformation Press, 1991).

[57] See the article on Rutherford House in the N. Cameron, ed., *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 734–5.

[58] See S. Bruce, *A House Divided : Protestantism, Schism and Secularisation* (London, 1990), ch. 8, and J. Garvey, 'Fundamentalism and American law', in M. Marty and R. S. Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance* (Chicago, 1993), ch. 3.

once described by *Newsweek* as 'the guru of fundamentalism'.[59] In *A Christian Manifesto* (1981), which he dedicated to Rutherford, Schaeffer claimed that 'Locke took Rutherford's *Lex, Rex* and secularised it', and that the ideas of *Lex, Rex* influenced the Founding Fathers through the Scottish minister John Witherspoon, who 'knew and stood consciously in the stream of Samuel Rutherford'.[60] Schaeffer had two purposes in resurrecting Rutherford. First, he wished to bolster the idea of a 'Christian America', showing that America had been built on a Christian base, which it was now in the process of betraying. Battling against 'secular humanists' and embarrassed by the obvious heterodoxy of the Founding Fathers, he was anxious to demonstrate the Christian roots of American liberties, and so justify his call for a return to them. However, Schaeffer's second purpose was to provide a justification for Christian civil disobedience. His book, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race* (1979), had converted large numbers of Evangelicals into fierce opponents of America's liberal abortion laws, but the pietistic conservatism of American fundamentalists led them to regard lawbreaking with the greatest horror. Schaeffer used Rutherford to argue that if a civil law conflicts with God's law, Christians have a right, indeed a duty, to disobey the government.

The impact of Schaeffer's arguments has been considerable. The 1843 edition of *Lex, Rex* was soon republished by a small Reformed press in Virginia, and Schaeffer's grand claims for Rutherford's historical importance were frequently recycled in the literature of the Christian Right, even after they had been thoroughly debunked by Evangelical academics.[61] Randall Terry – the founder of the anti-abortion protest movement, Operation Rescue – told the American political commentator, Garry Wills, 'You have to read Schaeffer's *Christian Manifesto* if you want to understand Operation Rescue', and he offered Wills a 'Rutherfordian' interpretation of America's past.[62] Terry has been described by Susan Faludi as 'the leading

[59] *Newsweek*, 1 November 1982, p. 88.

[60] F. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL, 1981), pp. 105–6. Numerous editions of this book have been published in America since 1981. Contrary to its assertions there is no evidence that either Locke or Witherspoon drew on Rutherford's ideas. As far as we know, neither writer owned a copy of *Lex, Rex* or quoted Rutherford even once. It would seem that Schaeffer was misled by the claims of J. Macleod, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh, 1943), pp. 71–3.

[61] See for instance, J. Eidsmore, *Christianity and the Constitution: The Faith of Our Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1987), pp. 25–6, 90; and T. LaHaye, *A Nation Without a Conscience* (Colorado Springs, 1994), p. 62. The debunkers were M. Noll, N. O. Hatch and G. M. Marsden, *The Search for Christian America* (Westchester, Ill., 1983), p. 142; and R. V. Pierard, 'Schaeffer on History', in R. W. Ruegsegger, ed., *Reflections on Francis Schaeffer* (Grand Rapids, 1986), pp. 212–19.

[62] G. Wills, *Under God: Religion and American Politics* (New York, 1990), ch. 28; 'Evangels of Abortion', *New York Review of Books*, 15 June 1989, pp. 15–21.